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Senate approves \$2 million for dam removal project

LANSING – The Senate this week approved the Department of Natural Resources budget which includes funding to speed the removal of three dams on the Kalamazoo River, said Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township.

The budget provides an additional \$2 million from the Clean Michigan Initiative Clean Water Fund for the removal of the Otsego, Plainwell and Trowbridge dams on the Kalamazoo River.

“The removal of these deteriorating dams will help remediate the risks posed by these unstable structures,” said Birkholz. “Removing them will help create new opportunities for tourism and fishing in West Michigan.”

Negotiations between local, federal and state officials to remove these dams have been ongoing for more than 20 years. Cleanup costs have been estimated at more than \$1 billion. The federal government retains the authority over the clean-up though the state owns the dams and is responsible for their condition.

The budget also provides for recovery of the dam removal costs from responsible parties by the department and allows for their restoration to the budget once acquired.

The DNR budget now goes to the House for approval.

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